

Faith and Inspiration

Together Apart

Due to the pandemic, many congregations have had to change their expectations for corporate worship. Homestead Mennonite Church (HMC) is no exception.

At the beginning of social distancing and the threat of COVID, we imagined that we would take a “break” from gathering. A week or month of no Sunday worship, we’d call each other throughout the weeks and have email devotionals, and then we’d be back together when everything calmed down.

It became clear, rather quickly, that this wasn’t going to work. For one, quarantining and social distancing weren’t going to pass in a week or even a month. For two, we didn’t want to stop meeting together. Sunday worship was more than habit. It was our main way to worship God corporately, a way to stay connected to the body at large, and for some, it was a support system to help us remember that God is stronger than our problems and with us in the midst of our suffering.

As such, we tried to find ways to still meet together, even if we couldn’t be face to face. We looked at email chains, phone lists, livestreamed sermons.

Eventually, we found Zoom and used it as our virtual meeting house. It has since become the bulk of our service. We get to watch music or lyric videos on our phones or computers. We read group confessions while muted so that we don’t cause others to lose their place when our voices clash due to latency. We listen to sermons that occasionally cut out from internet issues. And we wave to greet each other from the comfort of our homes. It’s not a perfect solution, but we still get to “have church.”

For some members of our body, however, that’s not enough. We crave the face-to-face, the proximity, the far-greater ease of communication. Because of that, we’ve more recently moved our services into a hybrid format. For those who are willing to risk the extra exposure, we open the building so that people can have that physical connection. With as little touching as possible, of course: We encourage social-distanced seating and masks, wave to each other from our seats, take

communion from prepackaged cups passed to us by tongs. It is by no means simple to coordinate a live and Zoom service at the same time, but again, we’re “having church” in ways that please multiple members of the body, so I think it’s a step in the right direction.

Throughout this process of finding safe ways of worship—from the initial phone chain ideas and on through our current hybrid process—questions have been posed to me multiple times. In a way, the questions ask if our focus on safety is misplaced. Forget doing things safely for just a moment—our primary goal for meeting together is supposed to be worshipping and glorifying God. By

them, he wrote letters, long letters that not only admonished the churches and taught them, but also sent his love to them, gave greetings and highlighted other Christians whom they might meet, and worked to worship with them even though they could not meet face to face.

Letters are cumbersome. They take time to compose, they don’t allow for immediate receipt or response, and really, there is no guarantee that a letter will reach its destination. They are not a perfect solution, but Paul used them as an effort at being the body of Christ even with the restraints of time and space, and later on, imprisonment. Even now, we the church get to read those letters, and by doing so, Paul gets to commune with us as well.

After all, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20 KJV). I don’t think gathering refers only, or even primarily, to the physical.

We gather when we meet in the building, yes, but we also gather when we send up the prayer chain that someone’s in the hospital, we gather when we email a devotional to each other, we gather when we call each other and share that God has been faithful even in our suffering.

We gather when we send our emotions and our thoughts to each other to edify the body, even across cultures, landmasses, and time. Those in the past touch those of us still alive today, who will also touch people beyond our earthly lives. God is in our midst, and we glorify him by gathering in his name, no matter how we do it.

But that is beyond the current point. When will we at HMC stop being a church? I’d like to say never. HMC continues to gather and be the body through our hybrid services. And in some ways, perhaps we’re doing better as a body than we were before social distancing. Now, someone in Homestead can pass the peace to someone in Brazil, who’s asking a question of someone in Colorado, all during the same worship service.

I can say with certainty that I don’t fear HMC will stop being a church due to our social distancing efforts, and I’d like to assure others that God is greater than the physical. He is with us. Whether we gather in a building, or over Zoom, or by calling up a fellow believer to pass on a praise report and a prayer request, or by sending letters, may we all strive to be the body of Christ together, even when life circumstances force us apart.



Luke Marshburn
Homestead
Mennonite Church



aiming too intently on doing it without risk, we may have increased our risk of straying from that initial goal.

If only half of us meet in the building, or all of us meet on Zoom, or we only contact each other as small prayer chains by phone, are we still “having church”? Or, as the question is often phrased, at which point in these efforts at distancing do we stop being a church altogether?

I take this question seriously. I am currently the only worship leader for my congregation, and I’m also one of the more tech-savvy individuals we have, so I have come to shoulder a lot of the responsibility of planning, implementing, and improving our ability to worship with each other.

That said, whenever this question rears up, I immediately think of all the myriad ways that people have tried to be the body of Christ together throughout history, even when life circumstances make things difficult.

I remember Paul the apostle’s letters. Yes, Paul went to great lengths to visit churches in person. He performed journey after journey as he circuited swaths of the world to meet with the body at large. But in tandem with those efforts, and sometimes even as a substitute for

OBITUARY

Marlow Jacobsen

Homestead resident Thomas Marlow Jacobsen, died January 12, 2021, at age 95.

Marlow was born September 20, 1925 to Marlow D. and Lou Jacobsen of Homestead Florida. He is preceded in death by his parents, his son John Jacobsen, and his first wife Mildred Jacobsen.

Marlow is survived by his wife Peggy Jacobsen, daughter Katrina Jacobsen Lavene, her husband Whitney G. Lavene, grandson John A. Ennis, his wife Christy and great granddaughter Harper, grandson James Ennis, granddaughter Lexi Lavene Vodopija, her husband John and great granddaughter Sadie, grandson Stephen Lavene, his wife Nikki and, grandson Daniel Lavene, stepsons Derek and Steve Eaker and brother-in-law James Wright.

Marlow served in the United States Navy during World War II as aerial photographer and returned to Florida where he attended college at the University of Florida. While Marlow and his father operated the Homestead Gas Company, Marlow also opened the Marathon Gas Company in the Florida Keys in 1950. Homestead Gas Company became a three generation operation when Marlow’s daughter Katrina joined the family business. During his career Marlow served on numerous industry boards and committees and was a founding member of Community Bank of Homestead.

Marlow was a member of the Silver Palm United Methodist Church and was dedicated to community service. In 1986 and 1987 he was named citizen of the year by the Greater Homestead/Florida City Chamber of Commerce. Marlow’s passion for state parks started in 1986 while being the longest sitting director of the Florida National Parks Association. He traveled the world for his love of orchids and was a true outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting from an early age. Marlow enjoyed “a life well lived”, filled with remarkable stories and adventures throughout.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to Florida National Parks Association 10 Parachute Key #51 Homestead, FL 33034.
<https://floridanationalparksassociation.com>



William Roy Mathis

August 24, 1937 ~ December 11, 2020

William Roy Mathis, 83 of Franklin, NC passed away Friday December 11, 2020.

He was born in Dade County, Florida to Ralph Mathis and Julia Mathis Grason. William graduated from South Dade High School in 1956.

He was an avid fan of airboats and fishing. He was a member of the Princeton Church of the Nazarene.

William leaves behind to cherish his memories, his mother, Julia Mathis Grason of Homestead, Fla.; his wife, June Anderson Mathis of Franklin, NC; his siblings, brother David Mathis of Trenton, FL and sisters Betty Rodriguez of Homestead, FL and Jean Gick of Garrett, Indiana. Two daughters, Vicki Dinges of Franklin, NC and Chrissey McFadden of Hernando Beach, Fla; six grandchildren, Katrina Grassman of Atlanta, Ga, Samantha Skinner, U.S.M.C of Fort Pendleton, Ca, Kyle Hess, U.S.N. of Virginia Beach, Va.; Daniel McFadden of Sequim, Wa., Mark McFadden, Jr. of Hernando Beach, Fla. and Cierra McFadden of Hernando Beach, Fla. In addition to his father, Ralph Mathis, William is preceded in death by a son William R. Mathis, Jr. and a sister, Darlene Coleman.

No services are planned at this time. Bryant-Grant Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the Mathis family. Online condolences can be made at www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com



State of our Schools

At the end of 2020, Brainly surveyed 1,000 US students to find out how the pandemic has impacted their educational outcomes and overall thoughts about the school year in review. Highlights from the survey data:

1. Stress took center stage in 2020. Roughly 80% of students said they experienced moderate to high levels of stress during the 2020 school year, which is up significantly from 59% in 2019.
2. Nearly 46% said the pandemic and shift to online learning in 2020 has impacted their plans to go to a traditional four-year college or university after graduation. 33% said it was because of safety concerns about



COVID while another 25% said it was high tuition costs.

3. 35% of students have struggled to focus while learning from home. Another 27% said their biggest challenge was not fully understanding the material due to lack of in-classroom instruction.
4. Mathematics was cited as the number one subject students had trouble with during 2020, performed worst in.

OBITUARY

Delma Luna

February 11, 1955 – December 25, 2020

It is with saddened hearts that we had to say goodbye to our mom, Delma on December 25, 2020.

Delma is preceded in death by her Mother and Father, Dora and Jesus, her sister Rosie, and her son-in-law Martin.

Delma is survived by her children Rosalinda, Norma and her husband James, and Andy and his partner Chris; her grandchildren Jennifer and Cynthia; her step grandchildren Priscilla and Justin; as well as her brothers and sisters Jessie, Robert, Mary, Dian, Wanda, Antonio, Amanda, George, Joe, and many other cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Delma was a hard-working woman with a heart full of love. Those who knew her knew she was loving, giving, and was always there for others.

Born in Floydada, Texas, Delma moved and spent most of her life in Homestead, FL.

Delma received her AA degree from Miami-Dade College, and worked with the City of Homestead for over 20 years, before retiring in 2008. After a year of retirement, Delma was asked to return to the city and she did so as a consultant.

Delma lived for her family and God. We are grateful to have so many wonderful memories with Delma and she will forever be in our hearts. Until the day we meet again, you will be sorely missed. We Love You Always.

A Memorial Service will be held on February 6, 2021 at Fusion Miami Church - 16325 SW 288th St, Homestead, FL, 33033. Time of services to be announced.



Temple Hatikvah

Homestead Jewish Center
A Reform Congregation

183 NE 8th St., Homestead
For information please call
305-454-4944
or visit www.thhjc.org

Sonny Hatch Sr.

John “Sonny” L. Hatch Sr., of Bear Creek, NC, passed away on January 7, 2021.

He was born in McNair, Arizona on June 6, 1929. He was married to Ruth Hatch.

John L. Hatch had a career in land clearing for his self-employed business “Sonny’s Land Clearing”. He was a member of Moose Lodge in Leisure City, FL, and had a passion for fishing, camping, and boating.

He is predeceased by his children: Donald Hatch and John Hatch Jr, his parents, and his brother, Pete Hatch. John is survived by his daughter, Patricia Richards; his grandchildren: Kristi Blanchard, Dean Richards Jr, Duane Richards, Jeremy Kinson, Diana Wilson, Nicole Dixon, Michael Diehl, and Billy Diehl; and his sister, Murdis Goins.



To submit an obituary or death notice, email wording and jpg photo to info@newsleadermail.com. Print deadline is Wednesday at noon. 305-245-2311



LESLI BURKHEAD
305-282-9603

List your home with me = **SOLD**
Call for a free property analysis.



Call a **DEPENDABLE** Hometown Realtor that will work hard for you when you’re buying or selling!

**Now's the Time to Buy or Sell
Market is Hot!**

**FOR THE BEST
RESULTS
STAY WITH THE
BEST!!**